
Bilingual Competence: Linguistic Interference or Grammatical Integrity?

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About the Author

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Abstract

This study reviews five papers focusing on Spanish in the United States setting in light of traditional and current research in the field of bilingualism. The author discusses methodological, conceptual, and analytical approaches to language contact, as well as the implications of various research frameworks for the findings. It is suggested that the "sociolinguistic method" can be successfully applied to the study of language contact.

Introduction

The Spanish-speaking population in the United States may be responsible for presenting the strongest challenge to English monolingualism that the country has encountered in the last century (Hasselmo, 1980). The dynamics of this challenge can be appreciated through the five papers on language contact that this author will review, dealing with developments in Puerto Rican, Chicano, and Judeo-Spanish dialects.

Urciuoli (1980) reports on the social factors involved in the process of contact between English and Spanish. On the basis of twenty months of intensive fieldwork in a Puerto Rican community, she was able to isolate three types of "contact sphere," or relationships, between groups with different native languages, and to elicit judgments about appropriate language functions in each sphere. Although the linguistic description of the types of transference that may take place within each contact channel has not yet been developed, this may prove to be a promising avenue of investigation.

By distinguishing between foreign influences that were present in Judeo-Spanish before the first half of the twentieth century and those that were incorporated more recently, and through examining code-switching, Harris (this volume) claims to find evidence of the disintegration and death of this dialect.

Lantolf (this volume) has detected qualitative differences between Chicano and Puerto Rican informants. His comparative research concerning relative clause reduction studied Spanish clauses containing a gerund functioning as an adjective or underlying *estar* plus locative adverbial, features "generated by contact between American English and the two Hispanic dialects" (this volume). Two of his seventeen putatively ungrammatical stimuli were judged significantly more acceptable by Chicanos than by Puerto Ricans, a result he attributes to the Chicanos' longer and more extensive contact with English and to environmental features that engender a low level of resistance to interference.

In the same vein, Silva-Corvalán (this volume) has examined functional and structural constraints on code-shifting among four Chicano adolescents, in relation to those constraints that had previously been posited for a stable bilingual Puerto Rican community (Poplack, 1978; 1980a). Her results show both quantitative and qualitative distinctions between the two groups. She suggests that code-shifting fulfills a compensatory function for speakers who need to communicate in a language in which they have a limited degree of competence, a finding that has implications for possible communication barriers between these speakers and their families.

Somewhat in contrast, Sobin (this volume) indicates that even in the case of gapping, the rules for which are generally not acquired in school, Spanish-English bilinguals show a high degree of separation of their

two syntactic systems: the intuitions of his informants appear to comply with the different systems of each language regarding gapping. He concludes that in the area of deletion phenomena, the possibilities of one language system's influencing another are very limited.

The very diversity of approaches, topics, and results of these studies is most encouraging from the point of view of scholarly interest. However, the picture they paint, if interpreted literally, bodes ill for the integrity, and indeed the survival, of these Spanish dialects in the United States. This review will suggest that at least some of the results and conclusions of these papers are traceable to their stances on three types of issues—methodological, conceptual, and ideological—that characterize the traditional contact literature and much current work. On the other hand, a growing body of empirical sociolinguistic research on language contact is beginning to indicate that the future of Spanish in the United States may not be so bleak. This review will indicate how the sociolinguistic method can be fruitfully applied to the study of language contact.

Methodological Issues

Data Collection

Sociolinguistic studies have shown that linguistic behavior is extremely sensitive to contextual features, such that apparently slight differences in context may produce qualitative differences in performance that vary in their distance from the speaker's actual communicative norm. Labov (1972a; 1972b) has demonstrated that the style that is most regular in its structure and its relation to the evolution of language is the vernacular, in which minimum attention is paid to monitoring speech (Labov, 1972a, p. 112; 1972b, p. 208). Observation of the vernacular, which is not to be equated with illiterate or lower-class speech but rather with spontaneous, unreflecting use of language in the absence of the observer, provides the most systematic data for the analysis of linguistic structure (Labov, 1972c, p. 214).

The problems involved in obtaining reliable samples of vernacular speech are compounded in a bilingual setting, even when the interviewer shares the same race, nationality, and language as the informants (Labov et al., 1968; Baugh, 1979; Rickford, 1979). Monolingual speakers, in formal or constrained circumstances, may still give an approximation to their vernacular, but to obtain naturalistic bilingual behavior, it is essential that the participants perceive the interlocutors, setting, and context to be appropriate. Otherwise, they might just as well engage in monolingual behavior, which is, after all, another one of the bilingual's options. Simulation of such an appropriate situation, let alone participation in it, is exceedingly difficult and time consuming. Urciuoli (1980) reports that her experimental code-switching was considered "funny and wrong" by her informants.

Even when contextual conditions appear to be met, the data may diverge qualitatively and quantitatively from the speaker's linguistic behavior in the absence of the observer. The author's attempts to elicit code-switching (Poplack, 1978) were far less successful than those of her colleague Pedraza, an in-group member who has been involved in participant observation and data collection in a bilingual Puerto Rican community in New York since 1975 (Pedraza, n.d.).

Figure 1 shows that code-switching occurs about as infrequently with a non-group member as it does in formal speech styles, the least propitious context for switching even in situations of shared ethnicity. When the interaction takes place with a group member in informal speech contexts, in contrast, there are about four times as many switches.

Figure 1

Average number of code-switches per minute by speech style
and group membership

Speech Style	No. of Code- Switches	No. of Conversation Minutes	Average No. of Code-Switches Per Minute
Formal	87	90	1
Informal (non- group members)	107	120	1
Informal (group members)	152	30	5
Vernacular	54	15	4
Total (from Poplack, 1978)	400		

Figure 2 shows that switching is also qualitatively different with a group member than with a nongroup member. Single noun switching, such as in example 1 below constitutes the largest proportion of switches with the nongroup member.

1. *¡Cuánta gente se han quedado pelados que han perdido un millón de pesos en dos segundos comprando shares que bajan y suben!* (58/207)
(How many people have ended up broke who've lost a million dollars in two seconds buying shares that go down and up!)

Many linguists (Gumperz, 1976; Wentz, 1977) do not even consider such examples as instances of "true" switching. Indeed, with a group member,

Figure 2

Distribution of noun switches by raw frequency and ethnic specificity with in-group and non-group member.

Noun Switches	Participant	
	In-Group	Non-Group
Nouns out of total number of code-switches	24% (70/292)	65% (70/108)
Ethnically loaded nouns (from Poplack, 1978)	49% (34/70)	89% (62/70)

this type of code-switching represents less than one-fourth of the total. Even these single noun switches are different in the two situations. When interacting with the nongroup member, the speaker's code-switches were largely confined to ethnically loaded nouns that are difficult to translate, as in example 2. On the other hand, when group members interact, this type of switch represents less than half of all code-switching instances.

2. I bought *orejas*, I bought *cuajo*, then he had *morcilla y guineños*. . . and the garbage ate it. (04/112) (Puerto Rican dishes)

It seems that the inherent difficulty of collecting data on in-group vernacular usage is not sufficient reason for the widespread avoidance of this methodology and the exclusive reliance on other types of elicitation. Three methods of data collection prevalent in the literature on bilingualism are discussed below.

Acceptability Judgments. Acceptability judgments are a relatively easy means of tapping community grammar norms. They may even yield information on structures currently used in a given community, although these may differ from standards for other communities. However, the respondents must in fact form a community, rather than an unrelated series of individuals chosen only to fulfill a number of extra-linguistic factors, such as sex, ethnicity, or age of second-language acquisition.

In this sense, the only paper under review that actually studies a community is that by Urciuoli (1980). The bilingual Chicano and Puerto Rican "communities" Lantolf (this volume) compares with a monolingual "community" may not be communities in either the sociological or the linguistic sense: the informants who constitute the first groups are students ranging in age from adolescence to young adulthood. The monolingual "community" he describes consists of ten educated speakers of unspecified Spanish dialects, but apparently includes at least one Spaniard and

one Chilean. In the absence of further information, it is difficult to interpret this comparison and to ascertain its bearing on either the question of norms or deviation from them.

In any event, sole reliance on this technique in the case of overtly stigmatized sociolinguistic markers—which is the focus of many minority language studies—is questionable. Labov (1972a) has discussed the validity of elicitation and intuitions as grounds for linguistic analysis, and in particular, the conditions under which researchers can ask direct questions about grammaticality with the expectation of receiving responses that relate to everyday language. He is led to enunciate a principle of *subordinate shift* (Labov, 1972a, p. 111), which asserts that when speakers of a subordinate dialect are asked direct questions about their language, their answers will shift in an irregular manner toward (or away from) the superordinate dialect. In the absence of any other data, Labov concludes, one must expect that the results of grammaticality elicitation and introspection will be invalid in a number of unspecified and unforeseeable ways.

Ample evidence in support of the principle of subordinate shift is available from recent studies of bilingual behavior. Constraints on code-switching based on acceptability judgments or introspection proposed by Timm (1975), Gingräs (1975), Gumperz (1976), Barkin and Rivas (1980), and others have been disproved by studies of natural speech by Pfaff (1975, 1976, 1979), Wentz (1977), McClure (1977), and Poplack (1978, 1980a).

Bilingual speakers studied by Huerta (1978) classified as "incorrect" the very code-switched utterances they themselves had produced. The two studies of syntactic deletion in this volume are based on this methodology. Both areas investigated fulfill the conditions Sobin lays out as a prime candidate for interlingual influence. The results of the study of gapping suggest that the syntax of one language does not appear to influence that of the other (Sobin); Lantolf's study of relative clause reduction claims the opposite. In cases like these, it may be helpful to investigate the relationship between what people say they do and what they actually do.

Translation and identification tasks. While translation and identification tasks may provide information on immediate reactions (Harris 1979), or on the degree to which speakers are conscious of an item's appropriateness to the first (L1) or second (L2) language, performance on such tasks may depend as much on memory limitations and cultural differences as on availability. Use of these instruments also raises the crucial issue of the "correct" response, which is impossible to ascertain without extensive knowledge of community norms. Arbitrary division of responses into "correct" forms versus others presupposes that there is only one correct response for a concept. A recent study of the introduction and incorporation of loanwords into Puerto Rican Spanish indicates that up to seven responses were possible for such apparently simple concepts as "garbage can" (Poplack and Sankoff, 1980).

Reliance on a dictionary of one dialect, even one that includes "well-known terms from other dialects" (Harris, 1979), is a questionable means of

distinguishing "correct responses" from interference, or interference from integration. This fails to consider the specific linguistic features that may be characteristic of a given speech community and treats language as static rather than dynamic.

Even when community norms are known, responses to such tests may not always be readily interpretable. In administering a series of acceptability, identification, and translatability tests to Swedish-English bilinguals, Hasselmo (1969) found that many items showed low translatability and high English identification, yet high acceptability, even in English phonological and morphological forms. Similar and equally uninterpretable results were found by Murphy (1974) among Chicano bilinguals, leading him to suggest that the tasks themselves may be inappropriate in establishing language boundaries.

"Free Speech." Perhaps the most potentially misleading results may be based on data drawn from so-called free speech which, in some cases, can consist of as little as three minutes of conversation. In Harris's study, the informants were asked to speak in Judeo-Spanish, while the interviewer occasionally asked questions in another language (Harris, 1979)—surely not a typical bilingual interchange. Why, then, should informants be expected to behave "typically" here? More important, is it justifiable to consider their behavior representative, and if so, of what is it representative? Similarly, in Silva-Corvalán's study (this volume) of Chicano code-switching, code alternation is investigated in a situation in which the bilingual subject is constrained to use the language in which he or she interacts less frequently. The resulting behavior is shown to be different from the naturalistic switching phenomena studied by Hasselmo (1972, 1979), Pfaff (1975, 1976), and Poplack (1978, 1980a). It frequently follows pauses, hesitations, and false starts; it violates the equivalence constraint, but it also violates monolingual Spanish grammaticality. However, determining what real-life situations this type of behavior typifies is difficult, since it in a sense forces informants to engage in interactions that are admittedly not natural to them—i.e., to speak Spanish, the language in which they are least proficient, to interlocutors they know to be bilingual. Silva-Corvalán suggests that this type of switching should be distinguished from that which represents a discourse mode in a community. This author submits that this distinction may be made on the basis of the circumstances of its occurrence, rather than from its linguistic characteristics: the most that can be said at present is that it occurs in a limited number of experimental situations and may have no further implications.

Analysis

It will be useful here to restate another principle that has become the foundation of sociolinguistic methodology, the principle of accountable reporting:

A report of a linguistic form or rule used in a speech community must include an account of the total population of utterances from which the observation is drawn, and the proportion of the expected utterances in which this form did in fact occur. (Labov et al., 1968, p. 70)

As Labov has pointed out, it is not the task of the linguist to explain or account for individual utterances, but rather to write the grammar of the language used by the speech community. The phenomena investigated by students of language contact—e.g., interference, influence, and change—are by their very nature quantitative. Researchers are therefore justified in talking about these phenomena if they are describing trends rather than isolated individual utterances.

In reviewing several dozen studies of verb usage in different dialects of Southwest Spanish, Floyd (1978) concludes that there are no substantive conclusions to be drawn, as it was not clear to what extent the examples provided as evidence reflected the respective corpora. Many studies cited only nonstandard forms; still others made claims with no supporting data. Bills (1975) has termed this the "Hispanic tradition" of language study, which he characterizes among other things by an "interest in the accumulation of speech fragments with little concern for linguistic or sociological context," and "almost exclusive interest in deviations from standard Spanish" to the practical exclusion of the standard aspect, "the bulk of the language" (Bills, 1975, pp. vi-vii).

While it is always instructive and entertaining to be presented with lists of "deviant" phenomena like borrowed words, such inventories do not indicate whether the borrowings represent 1 percent or 100 percent of the total lexical stock; whether they were used once by an isolated individual; or whether they have been fully integrated into the community repertoire. Such data can tell nothing about "foreign interference" and even less about its extent, contrary to a claim by Harris. Similarly, although Urciuoli says that "a non-standard variety of English" has developed among Puerto Ricans in New York from favoring "English structures that functioned like Spanish structures," no evidence is given in support of this claim (Urciuoli, 1980). Indeed, there is a good deal of empirical evidence against it (Language Policy Task Force, 1980; Poplack, 1980b).

Conceptual Issues

A second set of issues revolves around the conceptual aspect of the study of bilingualism. Perusal of the current literature on contact reveals that authors use the same labels to refer to different phenomena, with attendant theoretical implications. For example, in her study of "interference" and "language death," Harris (this volume) is actually describing borrowing and code-switching. In Lantolf's study (this volume) it is unclear whether the issue is convergence (as seen in the 62 percent of both Chicanos and Puerto Ricans who accepted the sentences rejected by ten

educated monolinguals), or whether the situation stems from aspects of the test situation. Silva-Corvalán's informants alternate between English and an incompletely acquired variety of Spanish (Silva-Corvalán, 1982, this volume). Urciuoli cites a variety of English which she claims "accumulates structures that will map equivalently with Spanish structures" (Urciuoli, 1980, p. 7), a phenomenon akin to what is often called "convergence" (Gumperz and Wilson, 1971; Gair, 1980) or "grammaticalization" (de Granda, 1968).

Interference

More than a decade ago, Fishman (1971) decried the widespread and indiscriminate employment of the term "interference" by many linguists in reference to any number of bilingual phenomena.

Instead of making the usual field work assumption that the underlying structures of the varieties encountered in bilingual speech communities were *unknown*, linguists have usually assumed that they *were* known, but basically nothing more than X "interfering" with Y and vice versa. As a result they frequently failed to familiarize themselves with the communities and speakers from which they obtained their corpuses of speech... (Fishman, 1971, p. 562)

Yet Weinreich himself clarified his use of the term "interference" to refer to "deviations from the norms of either language which *recur* in the speech of bilinguals as a result of language contact" as follows:

The term interference implies the *rearrangement of patterns* that results from the introduction of foreign elements into the more highly structured domains of language, such as the bulk of the phonemic system, a large part of the morphology and syntax, and some areas of the vocabulary. (emphasis added, Weinreich, 1953, p.1)

Today, "interference" is perhaps best reserved for a somewhat different phenomenon (as will be discussed below), while "transference" (see Clyne, 1967) captures Weinreich's original notion. It follows from these definitions that the mere existence of L2 structures parallel to L1 structures (which may be what Haugen, in 1950a, p. 228, calls "interlingual coincidences"), or the lack thereof, do not constitute proof of transference or Weinreichian interference. To establish this, it would be necessary to ascertain exactly the norms of the languages involved, to locate instances of "deviations" from these norms, and finally, to verify that such "deviations" are the *result* of language contact and could not have arisen independently.

Two of these conditions are far from trivial. The first involves painstaking collection and examination of speech as it is actually used in some community, an enterprise which can take years. The third requires careful historical and cross-dialectal comparison with varieties that have not been in contact with the supposed source language.

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Weinreich recognized the inherent difficulty of the endeavor, when he cautioned that

no easy way of measuring or characterizing the total impact of one language on another in the speech of bilinguals has been, or probably can be, devised. The only possible procedure is to describe the various forms of interference and to tabulate their frequency. (Weinreich, 1953, p. 63)

Despite the difficulties involved, recent sociolinguistic studies are beginning to show that it is possible to measure the impact of one language on another. Further, it can be measured in just the way suggested by Weinreich for bilingual communities and exemplified by Labov and his students in monolingual communities. These show that transference, while it does exist, is not nearly as widespread as anecdotal or nonquantitative studies of the same phenomena would have us believe—indeed, it may be limited to the acquisition process. In a series of quantitative linguistic studies of Ontarian French, a dialect which is sometimes claimed to be hybridized because of contact with English, Mougeon and his associates (1978, 1979) found that most of the grammatical expressions that appear to reflect the influence of English could be viewed equally well as natural, internal developments of the French language. Moreover, they found that even the limited number of expressions that could be attributed unquestionably to influence from English were used infrequently compared with their French equivalents (Mougeon and Canale, 1979; Mougeon et al., 1978). The same conclusions were reached independently in several quantitative examinations of the Spanish spoken by Puerto Ricans in East Harlem, New York (Poplack, 1978, 1980a, 1980b; Pousada and Poplack, 1979).

In a study of the acquisition of German by Greek and Turkish children, Pfaff and Portz found that even among language learners, the explanation of transference could be invoked only with regard to some syntactic structures that are realized through lexical items rather than general rules, i.e., a rather superficial process (Pfaff and Portz, 1979; Pfaff, 1980).

The term "interference" may best be reserved to describe an isolated occurrence that may be unpredictable, unintentional, and deviant from community norms (such as often occurs among L2 learners) as opposed to the patterned rearrangement of a system originally defined by Weinreich (1953).

Borrowing

"Borrowing," on the other hand, generally refers to interference after it has become accepted into a community norm. In this connection it is appropriate to ask whether there is a qualitative distinction between borrowed material that is "integrated into the code" (Mackey, 1970) and material that is in the process of being integrated. Judeo-Spanish is an

excellent case in point, since a very large proportion of what Harris considers "correct" Judeo-Spanish is by her own admission of Semitic, Romance, and Balkan origin (Harris, this volume). The recent English and modern Spanish incorporations may well be undergoing the same processes as those that, over the centuries, have come to be ratified as "correct."

Study of the actual mechanisms of borrowing is particularly crucial in the case of languages like Yiddish and Judeo-Spanish, which are spoken in widely separated parts of the world and in each place have incorporated features of the languages with which they come into contact. The large numbers of English loans and loan translations immediately distinguish the Yiddish spoken in New York from that spoken in France; on the other hand, the New York variety is also immediately identifiable as Yiddish. Can these differences, undoubtedly due to contact, be considered instances of interference or integration, i.e., evolution?

One way to find out, as Mackey suggested ten years ago, is to ascertain how community members express a given concept. If, for instance, 90 percent of Puerto Rican speakers today say *voy a la marqueta* in instances where Spaniards might say *voy al supermercado* (itself a calque from English), it is reasonable to predict that the term *marqueta*, which has been phonologically, morphologically, syntactically, semantically, and socially integrated into Puerto Rican Spanish, will eventually oust *supermercado* (or more likely, *supercolmado*), where it exists. Thus *marqueta*, though historically derived from English, can be synchronically described as a Spanish term rather than as an "English word with a Spanish ending" (Harris, this volume). Similarly, "mutton" can be considered an English word rather than a French word with an English pronunciation. The difference between "mutton" and *marqueta* from this perspective is one of time frame; the people who were around to decry the entry of *mouton* into the English vocabulary are no longer with us. Today "mutton" is considered, by all speakers of English, to be as upstanding and correct as its doublet "sheep"; according to present indications, a similar outcome might be in the offing for *marqueta*.

It is apparent—and the continued existence of languages that have incorporated vocabulary from many different sources will bear this out—that phenomena such as these are not in and of themselves indicative of impoverishment of vocabulary, lack of resources, or language death. Indeed, they may indicate an enrichment due to the availability of resources from two codes. However, that judgment is an empirical one. For example, when asked to provide designations for a picture of a pig, a group of Puerto Rican children and their parents came up with *lechón*, *puerco*, *cochino*, *cerdo*, and "pig" (Poplack and Sankoff, 1980). On the other hand, when asked to identify a photograph of a hot dog, they provided *fransura*, *perro caliente*, "hot dog", and *oscar mayer*, none of which is of Spanish origin. This should not be surprising since the concept of hot dog probably is linked, for these speakers, to U.S. culture. But methods such as

these can help researchers to distinguish between those entries that were borrowed to designate concepts or objects that did not exist in the home country, and those that presently may serve as stylistic alternates or a means of semantic differentiation.

Convergence

Convergence (or grammaticalization), which is an analogue to lexical borrowing on the phonological and syntactic levels, takes place in certain situations, while it is resisted in others. The most frequently attested cases are among the Indo-Dravidian languages. Convergence usually refers to adaptations on the part of one language to parallel another (usually superordinate) language, by favoring forms that most closely resemble those in the other language and eliminating those which do not. This process has been characterized as similar to pidginization and creolization in essence, if not in degree, and the languages involved in the contact situation may actually assume a different structural type (Weinreich, 1953; Gumperz and Wilson, 1971). In any event, convergence is very difficult to prove, even in well-documented cases.

In raising the question of how the reasons for contact between languages (and between their speakers) affect the formal results of contact, Urciuoli suggests that where there is a wide range of communication possibilities, there will be "abundant opportunities for transfer at all three levels, lexical, syntactic and grammatical" (Urciuoli, 1980, p. 16). Coupled with the fact that most of the contact is purportedly with nonstandard English, such opportunities are said to be responsible for the emergence of "Puerto Rican English," a variety that developed from "attracting English structures that functioned like Spanish structures" and that "provided convening points for code-switching" (Urciuoli, 1980, p. 11). Indeed, this functional syncretism between Puerto Rican English (PRE) and Spanish may underlie the development of code-switching, such that "PRE is the only variety of English that can be used so entirely in complement with Spanish" (Urciuoli, 1980, p. 21). Suggestions similar to the first have also been advanced by Gumperz and Wilson (1971) with regard to Hindi-Urdu-Marathi code-switching and by Lavandera (1978) with regard to Chicano Spanish-English code-switching.

Even setting aside the fact that nonstandard English is by no means the only variety of English to which Puerto Ricans are exposed, and the fact that code-switching involving Spanish has been attested in conjunction both with standard English (Poplack, 1978, 1979) and other languages (e.g., Yiddish and Hebrew; cf. Litvak, 1978), researchers cannot ignore the typological similarities between English and Spanish. The present lack of systematic comparison of so-called Puerto Rican English with other varieties of English makes these hypotheses impossible to substantiate. Indeed, what little information that is available about this dialect indicates

that it contains features that are not traceable to Puerto Rican Spanish, Black English, or standard English (Wolfram, 1974).

The acceptance by Chicano and Puerto Rican speakers of Spanish sentences purportedly constructed on an English model (Lantolf, this volume) could also indicate convergence, particularly if rating such sentences as acceptable is to be equated with "creating Spanish innovations," i.e., actually producing them. This convergence (or divergence from standard Spanish, as Lantolf terms it) is said to affect Chicanos more broadly and intensely than Puerto Ricans, who represent a more conservative linguistic posture. In fact, of fourteen unacceptable sentences, the majority of both groups accept twelve. Of the two remaining sentences, both involve the preposition *en*, once introducing an adverbial phrase and once preceding a gerund (*en terminando nos vamos*). The latter, which is in fact the only preposition used with the gerund in standard Spanish, accounts for the greatest difference between the two groups: 52% of the Chicanos rate it acceptable as opposed to none of the Puerto Ricans. In deciding whether to relate acceptance of the *en* + *gerund* construction to influence from English, Lantolf concludes that the attestation of utterances like these in Spanish dialects outside the U.S. should not "automatically compel one to eliminate the role of English in the case of Chicano Spanish," especially in view of their long frequency in the spoken language. He suggests that English may have served as a reinforcing agent for the *en* + *gerund* construction, raising the question of the frequency with which his informants are exposed to constructions of the type *on/upon finishing* in spoken English. Indeed, one wonders how Lantolf can tell that contact with English didn't reinforce the rejection of *en* + *gerund* sentences by the Puerto Ricans, and that it is in fact they who approximate standard tendencies less closely (Lantolf, this volume).

The low frequency of this construction even in Castilian Spanish, already mentioned by Lantolf, could explain why 100 percent of the Puerto Ricans, whose Spanish has already been shown to be innovative in other (phonological) respects, judged it unacceptable. But the 52 percent acceptance rate of the Chicanos may indicate that they are more conservative in this regard than are the Puerto Ricans, rather than the other way around. It seems premature, however, on the basis of these findings alone, to characterize the responses of the Chicanos as the "creation of innovations" and to ascribe them to a "low level of resistance to linguistic interference" (Lantolf, this volume).

Code-switching

Code-switching is a different analytical concept from interference, borrowing, or convergence. When used spontaneously and unreflectingly—i.e., naturally—code-switching does not in itself involve alteration or merger of any of the codes in contact. On the contrary, code-switching

demonstrates the force that keeps them apart. In constructing a formal grammar for code-switching and its rules, Sankoff and Poplack (1980) found that even in portions of discourse in close proximity to one or more switches, the speaker strictly maintained both qualitative and quantitative distinctions between Spanish and English grammars. Whenever a stretch of discourse could be clearly identified as monolingual, the rules of the appropriate monolingual grammar, and their associated probabilities, were exclusively at play.

This, of course, is in direct opposition to the type of language alternation referred to by Silva-Corvalán as "code-shifting" (this volume). According to her, this type of alternation fulfills the linguistic function of compensating for insufficient knowledge of one of the two languages; presumably Spanish, since the only exceptionless constraint on the data is that the internal structure of the switch should not violate the rules of English. (Most of the Spanish portions cited, however, *do* violate the word-order rules of English: e.g., *tiene ella, ella me, le pegaron*. Other Spanish portions violate the rules of Spanish—e.g., *yo sabe*, an error no native speaker of Spanish would make.)

In fact, there may be no exceptionless constraints on code-switching, just as there are no exceptionless constraints on monolingual speech (particularly when performance errors are included in the corpora¹). What is striking here, particularly in view of the quasi-experimental circumstances under which the Chicano code-switching data were obtained, is that there is in fact so little violation of the equivalence constraint, which indicates grammaticality in the two languages. Violations do not exceed 3 percent for the single-word switches; even for multiple-word constituents, one individual out of the four is responsible for the majority of the violations (Silva-Corvalán, this volume). It is clear from the number of pauses, hesitations, and false starts (which constitute 87 percent of all the data for this individual), that this person represents speakers with incomplete acquisitional histories. However, the precise degree appears to vary from speaker to speaker, not to mention a number of other interactional factors.

The conclusion that this speech behavior has implications for possible communication barriers between these Chicano adolescents and the members of their families or their community who are monolingual Spanish speakers is thus somewhat puzzling. The speakers report reserving their use of Spanish only for interaction with monolingual speakers. Yet the interviewer was not only a bilingual, but also one who constrained them to use a language other than the one they preferred. The conclusion is thus a nonsequitur. If the four informants do indeed belong to speech communities where they are required to communicate in Spanish, then it is quite likely that they will learn how to do so grammatically, possibly through any number of linguistic strategies (Language Policy Task Force, 1980). If they are members of speech communities where Spanish is not

required or reinforced, then their abilities in that language may well remain static. In the latter case, nonnative competence would not create communication barriers, either. As Urciuoli (1980) points out in questioning how shared understanding develops when there is no mutual linguistic intelligibility, this depends on the degree to which two groups will have reason and opportunity to interact on common ground.

Language Death

Language death, another widely used term, is ultimately a social, not a linguistic, process which may or may not have attendant linguistic consequences. Where language death occurs by way of extinction of the people who use it, it may happen that its last speakers remain fully fluent. In other cases, there may appear a group of speakers who use the dying language in a form that is different from that of the fluent-speaker norm (Dorian, 1980). The latter alternative is by no means a necessary prerequisite to language death, as shown by Dorian's work (1978) in several East Sutherland Gaelic-speaking villages. In examining the most morphologically complex structures in this dying dialect, Dorian concludes that East Sutherland Gaelic is "dying with its morphological boots on." On the basis of her studies, she suggests (1980) that dying dialects exhibit the same sorts of changes found in "healthy" languages. But while the types of change encountered are not unusual, the amount of change may well be. Resolution of this problem would of course depend on establishing rates of change in both healthy and dying languages. Dorian further points out that while language contact may play some role in the changes undergone by East Sutherland Gaelic, the role is neither a simple one nor is it sufficient to account for all the observed trends, since certain reductions can in no way be attributed to influence from English (Dorian, 1980).

To cite borrowing and code-switching, phenomena common to all bilingual communities, as indicative of death is a gross oversimplification. The same phenomena described for Judeo-Spanish are also characteristic of New York City Puerto Rican Spanish, a language that no one claims to be dying; indeed, it is thriving—in the East Harlem community there are third-generation speakers of both Spanish and English (Pedraza, ms.; Language Policy Task Force, 1980).²

Implications

What are the wider implications of the foregoing remarks? Unfortunately, scholars have all too often used the study of languages in contact as a testing ground for favored theories or as an opportunity to describe change. This is a methodological bias which fundamentally does a disservice to communities whose languages may be thriving and evolving. These linguists are implicitly falling into the trap of purists and pedagogues who, motivated by a variety of other reasons, claim that certain languages

are decaying or dying, or that their speakers are "alingual." In many cases this is simply not true. Careful, systematic studies show that, in general, cases of convergence are rare. Change may be involved, but there may be no reason to ascribe it to influence from English.

This was already noted by Sapir (1921) in his discussion of the impact of French on English. He points out that the "earlier students of English. . . grossly exaggerated the general 'disintegrating' effect of French on middle English" (p. 193) when in fact "the morphological influence exerted by foreign languages on English is hardly different in kind from the mere borrowing of words" (p. 201). On the contrary, those changes that English did undergo were largely determined by native drift. He concludes that

so long as such direct historical testimony as we have gives us no really convincing examples of profound morphological influence by diffusion, we shall do well not to put too much reliance in diffusion theories. On the whole, therefore, we shall ascribe the major concordances and divergences in linguistic forms . . . to the autonomous drift of language Language is probably the most self-contained, the most massively resistant of all social phenomena. It is easier to kill it off than to disintegrate its individual form. (Sapir, 1921, p. 206)

In sum, the recent profusion of studies on bilingualism is a most welcome development. But this development can lead in one of two different directions: it can become a justificatory adjunct to much already existing negative ideology about the speech varieties it describes, or it can shed some sorely needed light on the language adaptations of speech communities in complex demographic and social conditions.

Notes

1. I will not enter here into the question of the validity of using what may be construed as "performance errors" in the study of (monolingual or bilingual) grammaticality.
2. It should be clear that I am not taking a stand on whether Judeo-Spanish is in fact dying; I would merely point out that no evidence in favor of death emerges from the data presented by Harris.

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